

Nutrition Olympics Overview

**5 a Day – Power Play!, Inland Region
San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, Nutrition Program
351 N. Mt. View, Suite 104
San Bernardino, CA 92415**

Contact:

Melodee Lopez, RD

(909) 387-6318

FAX (909) 387-6899

mlopez@dph.sbcounty.gov

Most people would agree that children learn best when they participate in an activity that teaches them valuable skills and lets them have fun at the same time. Studies show we can have the greatest impact on children's health when we include the whole community, especially schools, peers, and family. The latest reports on the increase in childhood obesity accentuate the necessity of more concentrated efforts in protecting our children from this epidemic.

One protective factor against obesity cited in studies is the consumption of at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Other benefits of eating 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily include reducing the risk of developing chronic diseases like certain cancers, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and osteoporosis. Children and adults are not eating enough fruits and vegetables. Through repeated, consistent messages about healthy eating, we hope to improve the rate of consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Nutrition Olympics is one way to raise the awareness of children about the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables. The purpose of Nutrition Olympics is to expose children to different fruits and vegetables in a fun and interactive way. The event consists of activities for youth such as coconut bowling, cucumber javelin toss, grapefruit shot-put, and watermelon weight lifting. Plastic fruits and vegetables are used in some activities and recycling is encouraged for any unsalvageable fruits and vegetables used. The youth are directed through a route of physical activities. The stops along the way give them the opportunity to taste new food and learn about nutrition, especially the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables.

Coupling games that focus on fruits and vegetables with physical activity reinforces the 5 a day message and helps to foster life-long healthy choices. The children are provided with many interesting experiences with an accent on healthy bodies and a healthy environment. The overriding message for the event is that daily physical activity is fun, and that eating a variety of healthy foods, especially at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day is delicious and achievable.

Nutrition Olympics was initially developed as an outreach of the California Children's 5 a Day – Power Play! Campaign. The 5 a Day – Power Play! Campaign is a nutrition education program aimed at 9, 10, and 11 year old children with the message to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily for better health. Idea and Resource Kits, which contain pre-planned activities, cookbooks, and other materials, are available at no charge for teachers, community youth leaders, and others working with children in this age group.